Living/Dead

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by justheretoreadhannibalfics

Summary

Having a ghost lover is more complicated than one would think. Will has to deal with the only living relative of the Chesapeake Ripper, his own best friend, and unwanted advances from someone he has no interest in knowing better. Even with all that, he should be able to handle it.

Right?

If you haven't read After Life, probably do that first. For context.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

“You free tonight? I found a girl I think you’d totally be into, and she’s free to meet up for dinner.”

Will smiled and shook his head. He pushed his glasses up his nose and allowed his eyes to focus on Beverly instead of the frames.

“Not free and not interested,” he said, “I’m actually meeting with Chiyoh Murasaki, of all people. Even if I wanted to, this isn’t something I could bail on.”

Beverly raised her eyebrows.

“She came here? Does she just happen to be in town, or did she come just to meet you?” She asked. She was impressed, and more than a little confused. That amused Will.

Will shrugged, tugging on his scarf to make sure it was still in place around his neck.

“Not sure, but she said she wanted to meet me. You know we’ve been writing to each other a bit. Maybe she’s lonely. I can’t pass up the chance to actually meet her and ask her questions in person. She’s probably the only person still alive who will talk to me about Hannibal. At least who knew him while he was alive.”

Beverly nodded. She looked happy for him. It almost made Will feel guilty for lying to her about so much stuff right now.

“Dude. I totally get that. It would be like if I got to talk to Jack Crawford, one on one. I would have so many questions for him about the FBI and their lab setup. I want to see and put my hands on their gas chromatograph.”

Beverly flexed her fingers, as if imagining doing just that. Will couldn’t help but laugh at it. These things were not the same, but she had no idea about that. She knew only what Will had told her, and she thought this was what it all amounted to. A scholastic curiosity.

Beverly didn’t need to know just how wrong that was.

“You’d steal it, and then be on the FBI’s most wanted list forever,” Will said, leaning down to pick up a book from beside his chair, “then you’d never get a job working for them.”

Beverly’s hand shot out and snatched Will’s scarf, pulling it free from his neck and exposing it to the cool library air. He immediately flushed, knowing what it revealed.

“Oh. My. *God* ,” Bev said, accentuating each word and letting her mouth hang agape, “No wonder you’re not interested in this girl I found. When were you going to tell me you got someone?”

Will cleared his throat nervously, glancing around as if he thought his hickeys were the most important thing anyone in the library might have to look at.

“I don’t know,” he replied, snatching the scarf from her and pulling it back around his neck, wrapping it unnecessarily firmly to prevent another snatch, “Maybe when I felt like I could introduce you to him. It’s a bit of a strange situation, so I don’t know when that’s going to be a possibility.”

Beverly was now entirely invested in this line of conversation, much to Will’s chagrin. He had hoped to avoid all these questions by not telling Beverly about Hannibal until he had agreed to not kill her and all that jazz. Now, he would either have to lie, or refuse to talk about it.

Or, something he was very good at. Phrasing the truth to make it sound harmless.

“It’s a guy? Where did you meet him? What’s his name? Do I know him?” Beverly asked, her eyes sparkling with curiosity.

Will huffed a laugh.

“Funny story, actually,” he said, “And you’ve probably heard of him. I was walking along, making notes with my recorder. You know how I do that. I feel someone push me really hard, and the next thing I know I’m on my back. I’d lost my breath and couldn’t get up. I couldn’t see who had pushed me, either. Then, there he was.”

Beverly was hanging on his every word, and Will felt like he was turning his life into a soap opera for her.

“Did you hit your head? Did he get you help?” she asked, motioning for him to continue.

Will smiled.

“He was all the help I needed. He’s a doctor.”

Beverly’s eyebrows shot up in surprise, and Will could see her recalibrating her expectations of this hypothetical man. She had probably pictured someone close to Will’s own age, but now thought he must be older.

Not that she was wrong about that.

“A doctor? Doing a little gold digging, Graham? Where does he work?”

Will huffed.

“Emergency room,” he said, “he’s a surgeon.”

Beverly grinned slyly.

“A surgeon? He must be really good with his hands.”

Will flushed, his mind casting back to the night before and making him feel warm again.

Again, she was not wrong.

“So what’s his name?” Beverly prodded.

Will shook his head.

“If I told you, you’d find a way to get into the hospital just to bother him,” he said, “I’m not about to enable you like that.”

Beverly pouted theatrically.

“You know that’s not going to stop me,” she said sweetly, “I’ll break my own arm if it’s the only way I’ll get to meet him.”

Will stifled a laugh, glancing around to be sure there were no librarians glaring at them for being loud.

“It won’t come to that. The minute I’m done talking to Miss Chiyoh, I’m going to ask if he’ll let me bring you over sometime. He’s a great cook.”

Beverly considered that. At length, she gave a serious nod.

“Fine. But it’d better be soon. You know boyfriends have to get approval from the best friend.”

“Who says you’re my best friend?” Will said flatly, dropping all expression from his face.

Beverly knew he was joking, so she threw a hand to her forehead and closed her eyes.

“You have wounded me to the soul,” she claimed, “I may never recover from this terminal assault to my sensibilities.”

Will snorted a laugh.

“If it’s terminal, you won’t recover,” he said, “Exams have been frying your brains. When you try to sound eloquent it really shows.”

Beverly shrugged.

“Such is life, or whatever. I’m still expecting an invite in the next month. Sooner rather than later, young man.”

Will nodded and gathered his books.

“As soon as I can convince him,” he promised.

Will really had to get going, though. He was meeting with Chiyoh and the lawyer in less than an hour, and after he was heading directly to Hannibal’s.

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“Will Graham.”

Chiyoh wasn't exactly what Will had expected, and despite how warm her words had been in the letters she had sent, her gaze was cool and disapproving. He got the feeling she thought Hannibal was being foolish, or that Will wasn't worth the fuss he was making.

"That's me," he said, smiling brightly and offering his hand for a shake and keeping his eyes fixed on the frame of his glasses, "It's such a pleasure to meet you, Miss Chiyoh."

Chiyoh accepted the hand, though her expression didn't change. If she thought Hannibal was making a mistake, she was willing to let him continue until he suffered the consequences on his own.

"I confess I thought Hannibal was exaggerating when he wrote about you," Chiyoh said bluntly, "but now I think he was exactly correct."

Will wasn't sure what Hannibal had told her about him, but he flushed regardless. He tugged nervously at his scarf.

"Uh, well then, should we go ahead and get started with this whole thing?"

Chiyoh allowed his question to hang awkwardly in the air for a moment, making him shift on his feet and adjust his glasses again. She was trying to make him feel inferior, and it was working. Even though her hair was greying and her skin was sagging, she stood perfectly straight and her eyes shone with a fire not entirely unlike something he had seen in Hannibal's gaze a few times.

If anything, Will felt he could see they were truly related. It wasn't anything genetic, he thought, but rather something that betrayed shared experience or upbringing.

"Yes," she said at last, making Will's shoulders sag in relief, and let Will hold the door open for her, "let us get this over with. I am anxious to see my cousin."

Will felt the blood drain from his face, but he followed her silently into the office.

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"You understand what it is you are doing, and still wish to continue?" the lawyer asked, glancing up from his documents to look at Chiyoh.

She looked tired, but as certain as ever. Will was in silent awe of her, nearly forgetting what she had said just a few hours earlier.

"I do," she said, and Will thought even the lawyer felt intimidated by her, "I would not have asked for this if I were not entirely certain of it."

Hearing her say it, Will felt she didn't ever do anything without being certain of it. He didn't think it was possible for anyone to be the way she seemed, but he didn't have any idea what her flaws might be.

"Alright," the lawyer said finally, stereotypically tapping a stack of papers on the desk to even the edges, "everything is settled. It should be final and in the system by the end of the

week. I'll be in touch if there are any problems or further questions for either of you."

Chiyoh nodded curtly and stood. Will followed her example, trying in vain to mimic her self-assurance and confidence. He held the door for her again, and soon they were outside the office.

"Did you drive here, Will?" Chiyon asked, adjusting the scarf around her neck.

"Yes," Will said, reactively mimicking her and adjusting his own scarf.

Chiyoh nodded, the first ghost of a smile passing over her face.

"I will have someone bring your car. Ride with me."

There was no room for argument, and Will wasn't much tempted to regardless. She clearly wanted to talk to him, and he was curious to talk with her as well.

Chiyoh handed Will's keys to someone with instructions of where to bring the car, and she led Will to a large, black, expensive looking car that someone was already sitting behind the wheel of. They both sat in the back seat, and Will breathed in the scents of a recently cleaned car. It was absolutely a rental from some high brow agency.

Will was starting to feel overwhelmed by the sheer amount of wealth she possessed, and the future ramifications of what they had just done.

When Hannibal had first posited the idea, Will had been unable to fully comprehend it. He had always been poor, though in college he felt the most comfortable financially. The idea of all that money and property was like some unreality.

But it was finally hitting him.

"How is Hannibal?" Chiyoh asked, her voice oddly warm and fond.

Will frowned in confusion. She had been writing to Hannibal regularly for years. She must have had a good idea of how he was. So why was she asking him?

Chiyoh smiled softly, the expression kinder than Will would have expected from her.

"I mean in your opinion," she said, "how does he seem to you?"

Oh.

"He's more than I ever imagined," Will replied, trying not to sound breathy and pathetic. He had been dying to talk about Hannibal, but he couldn't do it with anyone. Chiyoh was his first chance to actually talk about him. "People call him a monster, and a sociopath, but he's not. He is strong and intelligent, and amazing in every way. I knew he was smart, and charming, of course, but I could never have imagined exactly what he's like."

Will was staring down at his hands as he spoke, so he didn't see when Chiyoh reached out. She pulled at Will's scarf, just enough to expose a dark mark on his neck.

Will flinched away from her, his face heating furiously at the second time those marks had given him away today.

“I apologize,” Chiyoh said, and her voice had softened, “I was curious. It is clear to me that Hannibal truly values you. I do not know what exactly it is you have done to earn it, so I am curious about you.”

Will cleared his throat and pulled his scarf back into place, though it clearly had no more purpose.

“I understand your curiosity, Miss Chiyoh,” he said, “and I hope you will forgive me for anything I may do that seems strange. I’m not very sociable.”

Chiyoh was slowly changing from the stern person she had first appeared to be, seeming more kind and open as the drive went on. Will was glad, because he felt like he had to pass some kind of test in her mind, or else something would end up not working out. Like Beverly had said, boyfriends have to get approved by the best friend.

Will thought he might be almost there with Chiyoh.

“How interesting, then, that my cousin is so interested in you,” she mused, “he has always been quite social, and he abhors rudeness.”

Will felt his face heat further, this time with something similar to shame. She didn’t think he was good enough for Hannibal.

Not that Will really considered himself good enough for Hannibal either. He could still hardly wrap his head around the thought that Hannibal found anything about him interesting at all.

The car stopped in front of Hannibal’s home, and Will was once again filled with a sense of awe at the grandeur and elegance of the building.

Chiyoh gave some quick instructions to the driver, and they both got out.

Chiyoh handed a key to Will, giving him that same, enigmatic smile from before.

“As you are now the caretaker of the property, legally, you should have this,” she said, “Might be easier than breaking in through the back door every night.”

Will nodded.

Hannibal let him in, actually, so he hadn’t broken in since the first time, and he wasn’t there every night. Just most nights.

Will didn’t bother correcting her, though. He just used the key to open the door, once again holding it open for her.

He was trying to be polite, so why had she made that comment about rudeness?

Will shut the door softly, and Chiyoh turned to him with a puzzled frown.

“I had expected him to greet us,” she said.

Will smiled politely, taking off his coat and scarf, hanging them up in the closet and turning to take hers as well.

“He’s in the kitchen, I would bet anything. He’s a good host, but he’s trusting me to do this,” Will said, hanging up her coat and scarf, “now, if you will follow me.”

Will could have assumed she knew the way to the kitchen, since she owned the house, but he knew it was better to play host this way. It was what Hannibal wanted from him.

Chiyoh followed, though she continued to seem somewhat bewildered. Something about this entire situation made Will suddenly determined to do everything perfectly. He wouldn’t give her any reason to doubt him or think less of him. He would put on the perfect play, and do what he had to to reassure Chiyoh that he was good enough.

Upon entering the kitchen, Will saw food simmering on the stove and ingredients on the counters. But Hannibal was not visible in the room.

“Welcome home, Will.”

The voice was in Will’s ear, and made a shiver run down his spine as Hannibal’s cold breath tickled his neck. He turned and felt Hannibal’s lips press against his own, quick and light because there was a guest. Though Will knew Hannibal wouldn’t be entirely against being somewhat improper in this situation. He was likely doing this for Will’s benefit. He could usually tell what Will was up to.

“Care to say hello to your cousin, Hannibal?” Will asked, moving over to the stove to see what Hannibal was making.

Hannibal flickered into view, smiling coolly. He turned to Chiyoh and nodded.

“Chiyoh. It has been long since I have seen you.”

Chiyoh looked Hannibal over, as if cataloging his entire appearance. Will wondered if she was envious that he still appeared young and healthy, while she had been condemned to age.

“It has,” she agreed, “you are looking well.”

Hannibal’s smile warmed, turning more genuine, and he walked over to continue his dinner preparations. Will moved aside and allowed him to take control of the kitchen as he always did.

“As are you,” Hannibal said pleasantly, “I presume everything went well today?”

Chiyoh glanced at Will, as if expecting him to object. Will calmly moved some scraps to the garbage, making no attempt to respond. She could say what it was she thought of it all, or she could assure Hannibal all was well. Either way, it was her call.

“Everything has been settled as you asked,” Chiyoh said carefully, “Though I cannot help but wonder if you have fully thought this through.”

Hannibal huffed a soft laugh, handing Will a cutting board with piles of diced vegetables on it. Will took it to the stove and added the vegetables to the broth.

“Have you known me to make decisions of this nature without thinking them through?” Hannibal asked her in reply.

Chiyoh considered it for a moment, watching Will as he brought the cutting board to the sink and rinsed it. She seemed confused, as much by the situation as by the peculiar ease with which Will moved and worked alongside Hannibal.

“I have known you to make some quite impulsive decisions in your life,” she told him sternly, “and though I wouldn’t have expected this from you, I can’t help but wonder if this is merely another one of your whims.”

Hannibal smiled at her, and now Will understood what he had meant when he said Will understood him better than Chiyoh. It was obvious to him that Hannibal’s entire world was driven in part by his peculiar whims. One train of thought was always for his own amusement, and he satisfied it often. That made him impulsive at times, but he had enough impulse control to never do anything without some preemptive consideration of the long term ramifications.

Something like this could have been neither a mere whim nor impulsive. It had taken months of consideration and planning.

That was what Chiyoh didn’t see.

“You are questioning my judgment,” Hannibal mused, seemingly unperturbed by it. Will stirred the pot on the stove. “Do you think my death has compromised my ability to think critically, or the time I have spent alone in this house for all these years?”

Chiyoh sighed, seeming to resign herself to what it was.

“I have not attempted to talk you out of it,” she said, “and I see no reason to do so now. I just wanted to be certain you are sure.”

Hannibal smiled politely.

“I appreciate the consideration,” he told her, “and I assure you I have not made this decision lightly.”

Chiyoh nodded, and that was apparently the end of it.

“Will,” Hannibal said warmly, “How is the broth?”

Will knew Hannibal didn’t need Will’s input. He could tell just from the smell, and his own experience. It was Hannibal’s signal that Will was now invited back into the conversation.

“Five to ten minutes, I think,” Will told him, coming to stand next to Hannibal at the counter.

Hannibal smiled, leaning to kiss Will again without taking his hands away from his work. Will wondered if it was mostly for show, to prove to Chiyoh neither of them was unhappy or being taken advantage of by the other. It seemed like something Hannibal might do, though Will also knew Hannibal didn’t much care what other people thought. Especially now he was dead.

“You have something you wish to talk to me about,” Hannibal noted, raising an eyebrow as he looked Will over.

Will smiled. Hannibal always knew.

“I had thought it could wait until we didn’t have company,” he said, smiling politely to Chiyoh, “but I want to invite Beverly to dinner sometime soon.”

Will saw the disapproval in Chiyoh’s face, but he didn’t care that much. He didn’t need her to like him. He didn’t need her to approve. He had Hannibal. It was clear Hannibal wasn’t going to change his mind about Will because of anything Chiyoh thought or said. At least, that was what Hannibal clearly wanted Will to think. So Will would try to be more comfortable for the time being.

“Did your scarf fail in its purpose today?” Hannibal asked slyly.

Will blushed and turned his head to the side.

“It moved when I reached for a book,” he confessed, “but I was going to ask you anyhow. She’s my best friend, and if she knows I’m in a relationship she’ll stop trying to set me up with people.”

Will could feel the spark of displeasure Hannibal felt at the idea of Will going out on a date with anyone. Will had already known Hannibal was the possessive type, but every reminder that he felt so strongly about Will made him feel more in love with the ghost.

“You don’t think she will disapprove of me?” Hannibal asked, though he didn’t really sound concerned about it. They both knew there wasn’t much Beverly could do about it if she did.

Will shook his head. He smiled at Hannibal sweetly.

“How could anyone disapprove of you, Doctor Lecter?” he asked.

Hannibal smiled.

“Very well,” he said warmly, “Tuesday, if she can make it, would be suitable for us I think.”

Will smiled.

“Thank you,” he said, pulling away from the counter, “I’ll set the table.”

Will retrieved the dishes and silverware and went to the dining room.

If there was anything Chiyoh would not say in his presence, though he seriously doubted there was, she would now have the chance to bring it up. Or, conversely, if Hannibal had anything to say he did not wish Will to hear, now was the time.

Will set the places carefully, knowing he was putting more effort than was warranted into showing Chiyoh he was good enough. He didn't want to give her any fuel for her disapproval. He knew he wasn't very good at getting people to like him, but he didn't think that would be in the way for someone who knew about Hannibal and still accepted him.

He just didn't want Chiyoh's doubt of him to cause Hannibal to question all this. He didn't want to lose this after everything.

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"You were anxious for her to leave," Hannibal mused as he and Will washed the dishes.

Will shrugged.

"She doesn't like me much," Will admitted, "I could tell that. She's fond of you, but she doesn't adore you to the point where she believes you can do no wrong. If she did, she would probably like me a bit more. But because she knows you are imperfect, she thinks I could be a mistake. There wasn't much I could do to convince her otherwise."

Hannibal smiled. As always, he was remarkably unbothered by everything.

"Your perception, as always, impresses me. You have no need to worry, though, as Chiyoh is famously difficult to endear yourself to. There are very few living people she likes. I think it would be rather difficult to work with her if she did adore me to the point of deification. I would not want to, in that case."

Will huffed a laugh.

"Of course, what would be the fun if she just did everything you wanted without pushing back?" he asked, "do you think she thinks less of me because I wasn't contradicting you at all? Would she respect me more if I fought you?"

Hannibal smiled, pulling close behind Will and setting his hands on Will's hips.

"I doubt it," he said softly, his words cool against Will's ear, "She would have told me it was a sign we could not get along, or some such thing."

Will turned in Hannibal's arms and kissed him, leaving damp handprints on the front of his shirt. Something Will doubted Hannibal would allow any other, as it would be seen as rude. They wouldn't last, anyway. As a ghost, he could choose whether or not he was tangible, and the moment Hannibal was not, the water would leave his clothes.

"There was really no way for me to win, then," Will said, "she would have found fault in anything I did."

Hannibal nodded, rubbing his cheek against Will's in a way reminiscent of a cat. For a man who appeared proper and aloof to all the world, Hannibal was remarkably tactile and starved of touch. That was fine for Will, because he craved the nearness an equal amount.

"How do you expect Beverly to react when she understands the nature of our unique relationship?" Hannibal asked.

Will hummed, pressing his face to the side of Hannibal's neck and relishing the coolness of his skin. That was one wonderfully strange thing about being with a ghost. Hannibal was always cold.

"She will probably tell me I told you so a few times after she gets over the initial shock. I'm not sure exactly how she'll handle the idea of me being with a serial killer, but again, there's not much she can do about it. Other than call in an exorcist, I suppose."

Hannibal bit gently at Will's earlobe, and pulled back.

"Would she?" he asked, sounding more curious than concerned.

Will shrugged.

"I doubt it. She should be able to see that I'm not unhappy with you, and you haven't been killing people unless they break into your house first, in the time since you've been dead. It's not like you're still a danger to society."

Will paused thoughtfully.

"For the most part. Maybe we won't tell her absolutely everything."
Hannibal agreed with a smile.

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"Will!"

Will internally grimaced at the sound of his own name being called. He recognized the voice, and had no desire to see or speak with Matthew. Now, or really ever.

But Will turned toward the other, adjusting his glasses so the frame would block his eyes.

"Hi, Matthew," he said blandly.

Matthew's smile was radiant, grating against Will's nerves like nails on a chalkboard. He seemed pleased to have been recognized. Will briefly wished he had pretended to not know who he was, if only to have dampened that smile a bit.

"I haven't seen you around much lately," Matthew said, placing a hand on Will's shoulder as if they were good friends, "you get a new job or something?"

Will could tell Matthew didn't actually think that was the explanation. He was testing Will to see if he would lie.

“No,” Will said flatly, not bothering to explain himself further. He wanted this conversation to be over, though it had only just begun.

Matthew laughed. He was far too close for Will’s comfort, and didn’t seem to have any intention of moving away.

“Alright, then where have you been running off to? You’re hardly ever on campus anymore.”

Will bristled a bit, realizing Matthew’s inexplicable interest in him was verging on obsession. He had been watching Will, if not also following him.

Will tugged a bit at his scarf, trying to think of a way he could get Matthew to leave him alone.

“I’ve been, uh, visiting my partner,” he said at length, deciding once more on some level of truth. It was the safest route, especially if Matthew had been following him.

Matthew’s face hardened immediately, and Will wondered if maybe it hadn’t been the safest option after all. He might have just upset Matthew.

Without warning, Matthew lunged forward and grabbed Will’s scarf, pulling it away from his neck and setting one hand against the side of Will’s head to really expose the skin there. Will pushed him away, hot with anger and frustrated that he hadn’t been able to defend himself.

“What the Hell, Matthew?” he demanded, fixing the scarf and cursing under his breath.

“You’re really sleeping with someone,” Matthew said, and he sounded angry. It scared Will.

But he didn’t back down.

“Yeah, I am,” he said defiantly, “and it’s really none of your business. You really can’t catch a hint, can you? You are so clueless and juvenile, like a spoiled child. You think you can just take whatever you want. That’s why you won’t accept the fact that I don’t want to have anything to do with you.”

Will snapped his mouth shut, surprised by his own stupid bravery in saying those things. He didn’t normally tell people exactly what he thought, no matter how much they annoyed him. He thought being around Hannibal must have boosted his confidence, and he wasn’t sure if that was a good thing in this situation.

Matthew’s expression was dark and dangerous, making Will more sure he had just made a terrible mistake. This wasn’t the kind of person he should have provoked.

“I guess I’ll see you around, Will.”

And Matthew was gone.

Will was startled by that turn, and let out a long huff of air. He had been sure only moments ago that Matthew would try to harm him in some way. He had been absolutely sure Matthew was dangerous to him. But he had just left. Without even saying anything.

—

“Something is bothering you,” Hannibal noted, and Will looked up from his book. He had taken to doing most of his course work at the large, beautiful desk in the study so he could be near Hannibal. It was a wonderful, warm atmosphere, and Hannibal was helpful whenever he got stuck on something.

“Might be,” Will hedged, not sure he wanted to tell his lover about his run in with Matthew, “Lots of things bother me. I’m a generally disgruntled person.”

Hannibal huffed a soft laugh and lifted Will’s scarf from the chair where he had left it. Hannibal lifted the article to his nose, and Will knew he was caught. It was nigh impossible for him to hide anything from Hannibal.

“Someone has handled this,” Hannibal said, his tone growing low and dark, “Someone other than Beverly or yourself. I take it that means someone else has discovered your dark little secret.”

Hannibal’s voice was dangerous, and Will couldn’t help the dark thrill that ran up his spine at the sound. He knew there would be no getting out of this. If he tried to lie or cover up what had happened, there would be a punishment.

“A guy that’s been interested in me,” Will answered with a sigh, “I’ve told him no about a hundred times. He didn’t believe me when I said I was seeing someone. Maybe he knew what he would see, or he just guessed.”

Hannibal set down the scarf and prowled towards Will, every inch a predator. His eyes were glowing red with his anger, and Will hoped his anger wasn’t directed at himself.

“This boy touched you, then,” Hannibal said, his tone now as cold as his skin, “against your wishes.”

Will chewed his lip. He knew it wasn’t a wonderful idea to make Hannibal more angry, but knowing it would be worse if he lied.

“He’s been watching me, and I suspect he’s also followed me at least once,” he confessed, “he gave me no choice but to tell him I have a partner.”

Hannibal growled low in his throat, making Will’s heart race with exhilaration.

“How rude,” he murmured, sliding a hand into Will’s hair.

Despite the anger and danger in his entire body, Hannibal’s touch was soft and gentle.

“I told him off, though,” Will said, “Told him he’s acting like a spoiled child and I want nothing to do with him. It made him angry, but he left.”

Will was still confused about Matthew’s reaction, but at that moment he didn’t care. He recognized the hunger in Hannibal’s eyes and knew he wasn’t likely to get any more studying done that night.

“I suppose I should make my claim to you more obvious,” Hannibal said softly, leaning in and setting his teeth on Will’s jaw.

Where it would really show.

Will clutched at Hannibal, his mind conflicted with opposing desires. He had asked Hannibal to bite him where the scarf would hide it, because he had wanted to hide the marks from Beverly and everyone else at the college. Even though Bev knew now, he still felt compelled to hide it.

But he also wanted to show it off. He wanted everyone to know he belonged to Hannibal.

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“Are you sure this guy is good for you?” Beverly asked, eyeing the bite on Will’s jaw, “not to be a buzzkill, but that’s a larger amount of lovebites than is normal.”

Will grinned, touching the bite on his jaw and pressing a bit so he could feel the sting.

“He doesn’t do anything to me that I don’t want,” he told her, “It might make more sense when you meet him. He said I could bring you to dinner tonight. Do you want to?”

Beverly clapped in excitement.

“Yes. Absolutely. I’m finally going to meet your hot doctor boyfriend.”

Will rolled his eyes, but he was smiling. He was excited for it too, even though he was nervous. Will was afraid of how Beverly might react to finding out who Hannibal was, and he was afraid of what Hannibal meant to do about Matthew. Will hadn’t been able to convince Hannibal to talk about it anymore, but he could tell the man was planning something.

“I hope you don’t go trying to make a fool of me or anything,” Will said, “I really really like him, and I want you two to get along. He won’t like it very much if you try to embarrass me, and of course I’d rather you didn’t.”

Beverly laughed, jabbing him with her elbow.

“As long as he’s not a serial killer or something, I’ll do my best to make a good impression.”

Will offered a tense smile in return, internally panicking.

“What would you do if he *is* a serial killer?” he asked, hoping he sounded like he was joking.

Beverly raised an eyebrow.

“I’d get you out of there and away from him, first and foremost,” she said, “then, I’d call Jack Crawford himself and send him in. I’m not letting you get killed or kidnapped by a creepy murderer.”

Will huffed a soft laugh.

Great.

He still had hope that he could pull this off, but he was worried how Hannibal might react if Beverly objected. Hannibal could be temperamental, and impossible to reason with. If he got it into his head to kill Beverly, Will wouldn't be able to stop him.

He might, actually. Will wasn't oblivious to the substantial leverage he had with the ghost. He just hadn't needed to use it yet. Hopefully it would be enough, if it was necessary.

"Heard back from the FBI recruiters?" Bev asked.

Will grinned.

"Yep. I actually have a meeting with your hero in a couple of weeks. He's usually booked for months into the future, but he opened a spot for me. Because of my paper on the Chesapeake Ripper."

Beverly gave a mock shout of insult and whacked Will on the shoulder. Hard enough to very nearly hurt, but not quite.

"You son of a bitch!" she said, "why didn't you tell me? I could skin you alive I'm so jealous right now. Put in a good word for me? Is that weird to ask?"

Will laughed, his anxiety and doubts temporarily taking a backseat.

"Definitely. I'll let them know you're so obsessed it would be a mistake to hire you, and they would probably be better off looking elsewhere."

Beverly whacked him again.

—

Will entered the house and pulled off his glasses. He usually didn't wear them in the house now, because Hannibal always found an excuse to divest him of them.

Will didn't know where Hannibal was today. He wasn't there in the foyer to greet Will as he usually was, nor did Will hear him moving around in the kitchen.

So it was a game of hide and seek then.

Will went to the study.

"Hannibal?" Will called, looking around, "don't forget about dinner. Beverly is coming. I gave her the address."

Will knew Hannibal was in here. He could feel him. After living with a ghost for a while, Will found he had acquired the ability to sense his presence. That didn't mean he could really pinpoint his exact location.

That was to Hannibal's advantage, because he loved to sneak up behind Will.

“Do you really believe I would forget such a thing?” Hannibal asked, his breath in Will’s ear and his hands suddenly on Will’s hips, pulling him flush up against Hannibal’s chest.

Will huffed and tipped his head back to lay it on Hannibal’s shoulder. He lifted one hand and carded his fingers into Hannibal’s hair, stealing a quick kiss from his ghost.

“You’re playing games, Doctor Lecter,” he chided, “wasting time. I would have expected you to already be preparing dinner.”

Hannibal hummed, curling his arms around Will’s stomach and chest, effectively pinning him in place. He nuzzled into the side of Will’s neck, putting kisses and bites into his skin.

“I am awaiting the final ingredient,” Hannibal said, making Will freeze.

Will tried to pull away, but he was caught like a fish in a net. He couldn’t break out of Hannibal’s cold, solid grip.

There was a sound from the back of the house. Will knew that sound. It was someone popping open the sliding glass door from the garden. Just like he had done the first night.

Someone was here.

“Hannibal,” Will hissed, “What the hell are you doing?”

Hannibal held Will tight, biting him hard enough to hurt.

“I am protecting what is mine. Do not get in my way. Do not try to stop me.”

And all at once Hannibal was gone. Vanished. Will stumbled and fell to one of the chairs by the bookshelves.

It only took Will a moment to recover, and he was sprinting to the back of the house.

Hannibal was going to kill someone. Tonight. While Will was in the house. He had never done that before, and it could put everything in danger. He was risking everything.

And Will thought he knew why.

Will entered the dining room and saw Matthew there. The other boy froze when he saw Will, his lips twitching into the beginning of a smile. Then, all at once, his face broke into one of horror and pain, and a red splash of color appeared on the front of his shirt. Will felt his jaw drop as Hannibal appeared, his eyes flashing red, one hand buried in Matthew’s chest.

Hannibal ripped his hand from the boy’s chest, tearing out Matthew’s heart in one violent but fluid motion. Matthew fell to the floor, blood pouring from his mouth and chest. He hadn’t even had the chance to make one last, filthy remark.

Hannibal turned to Will, holding the heart in his bloody hand.

“For you, my dear,” Hannibal said smoothly, “he was unworthy of it. Do you think Miss Katz will object to eating the heart of such a pig?”

Will walked around to Hannibal, unsure what he was going to do when he reached him. Hannibal seemed likewise unsure, because he simply allowed Will to approach.

Will took hold of Hannibal’s jacket, curling his hands into fists in the rich fabric that existed in a debatable state of reality.

Will yanked Hannibal into a kiss, feeling a fire deep in his chest that threatened to burn him up from the inside. He had never felt more attracted to Hannibal than he did just then, seeing him with blood on his hands and victorious, having acted aggressively in order to defend Will. God, he was so hot.

“You had better clean this up before Beverly gets here,” Will said sternly, though it may have been undermined a bit by his breathlessness, “you made this mess, so you deal with it. But my best friend is coming for dinner, and you need to make a good impression. If you don’t, I’ll go sleep at the library tonight.”

Hannibal’s eyes flashed red, and he pulled Will into another devouring kiss.

“Will Graham, I will never let you go. You are mine unto death.”

Will huffed a laugh.

“And beyond it,” he said slyly, “but you are equally mine, so you had better do as I ask.”

“Always.”

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“Okay, Will, not gonna lie, I’m a little spooked. This is the Ripper house, yeah? I thought you said Lecter’s cousin refused to sell it. How did your sugar daddy manage to get his hands on it?”

Beverly looked genuinely concerned and confused. Will found that simultaneously amusing and stressful. He really didn’t know how she was going to react to this all.

“That’s a funny story, actually,” Will said, “here, come into the study. I’ll pour you a drink while he finishes dinner. He’ll come get us when he’s ready.”

Beverly followed, staring all around as if she couldn’t believe what she was seeing. Will could relate. He still found this all hard to believe most days.

Will offered her one of the comfortable armchairs and poured her a glass of whiskey. Hannibal would probably sniff at him for it, but he felt she would need something a bit stronger than wine for what she was going to have to get through tonight.

“Okay,” Will said, sitting down with his own glass and turning to face Beverly, “There’s a lot to say about this all, and I don’t know how to tell you everything in a way that you’ll

understand.”

Beverly raised an eyebrow as she took a swig of her drink.

“I’m listening,” she said, “you don’t think your guy should be here to help you explain?”

Will smiled wryly.

“There are a couple things I need to say before you meet him,” he said, “because it’s really… complicated.”

Beverly narrowed her eyes.

“If he’s married I swear to god I’ll break his knees,” she said, “No one gets to mess with my best friend.”

Will shook his head, huffing a laugh.

“No, he’s not married. I’m almost offended you think I could get got like that. No, what’s happening here is a lot more strange than that.”

Beverly took another drink, nodding for Will to continue.

“Alright, well, remember how I told you people think this house is haunted?” he asked, and Beverly nodded again, “they were right. It’s haunted. And I wasn’t really perfectly honest with you about how I met my partner.”

Beverly looked more confused than ever, and Will prayed she wouldn’t freak out when she understood what was going on.

“So, I actually broke into this house, just to look around and get a feel for Lecter. You know, I said I didn’t really know him as well as I wanted to.”

“Son of a bitch!” Beverly exclaimed, “Will, you felon! I never thought you’d have it in you. Did the guy already own the house, and you walked in on him? That’s insane.”

Will huffed a nervous laugh, because that wasn’t all that far from the truth. But at the same time it was galaxies away.

There was a hand on Will’s shoulder, and breath on his neck. Hannibal was there.

“Sort of,” Will said, “uh, Bev, I’d like to introduce you to my partner.”

Hannibal made himself visible, startling Beverly into dropping her glass. Will had seen it coming, and caught it before it could hit the ground. Hannibal wouldn’t be pleased if he had to clean up broken glass tonight. Not after everything.

“Doctor Hannibal Lecter.”

Beverly stared, open mouthed and shocked.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Miss Katz,” Hannibal said smoothly, tracing a thumb over Will’s carotid artery, “Will speaks highly of you.”

Will smiled nervously.

“I guess you were right all along. Ghosts are real.”

“Will,” Beverly said, her voice deceptively calm, there was still a lot to talk about, “If he hurts you I will get an exorcist. And, I told you so.”

End Notes

A sequel to my ghost story! I'm considering making this an annual thing, a series of ghost stories published on the first of October, depicting the slow growth and progress of their relationship. Thoughts? Prayers? Exorcisms?

Thanks for reading <3 <3 <3

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!